Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grant

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Community Change Grant

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grant Program (Community Change Grants or CCGs) is funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and will support community-driven projects that address climate challenges, reduce pollution, and strengthen communities through thoughtful implementation.

Eligibility Requirements

- Must consist of a partnership between a Lead Applicant and a Statutory Partner

- The Statutory Partner must be an eligible Community Based Organization (CBO)

- Must benefit disadvantaged communities

- Must have a minimum project budget of $1 million

- No financial match requirement

Track II: Meaningful Engagement for Equitable Governance

Project under Track II will support the engagement of disadvantaged communities in governmental processes to advance environmental and climate justice over three years.

Projects should focus on providing disadvantaged communities with information about issues that impact them directly while creating mechanisms for the government to gather input to ensure community needs inform decision-making and are integrated into government processes and policies.

Three Barriers to Disadvantaged Communities' Participation

City staff have learned important lessons about engagement with disadvantaged communities over the past few years, particularly with the ARPA public engagement process.

Three main barriers have previously limited these communities' engagement with the City:

1. A lack of understanding of government policies and public engagement processes due to language differences or insufficient background knowledge

2. A perception of public engagement processes as temporary and not leading to sustainable change, and

3. A lack of transparency and feedback mechanisms

Proposed Partnership

City of Harrisonburg
Lead Applicant

Church World Services
Statutory Partner

Northeast Neighborhood
Association

Collaborating Entity
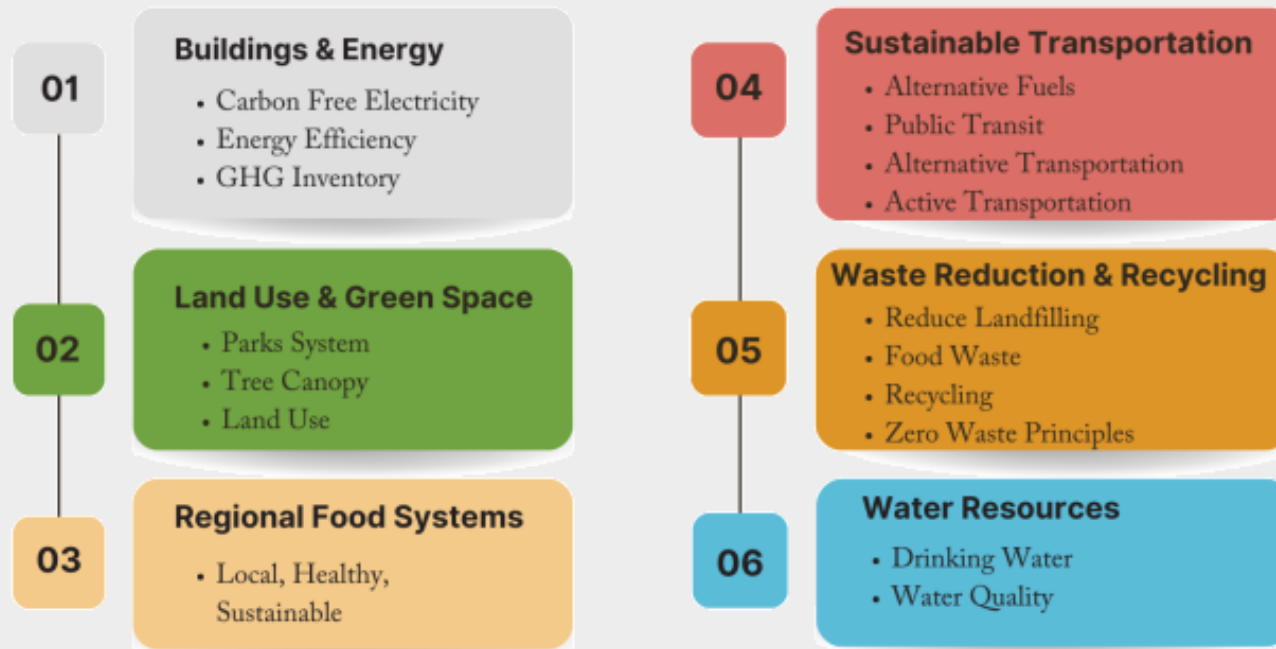
Project Leadership Structure

Project designed after the Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model. Under the CBPR model, research questions stem from a social justice imperative, and engagement strategies are identified in collaboration with the impacted community.

The City, CWS, Collaborating Entities, and disadvantaged communities will have equal representation on a Project Steering Board.
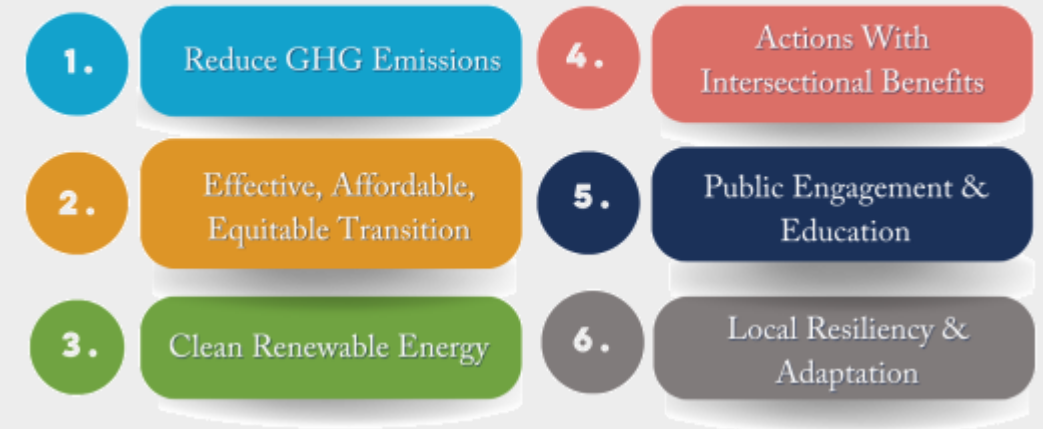
Promotes active and sustained participation from community members and partner organizations throughout the project's duration.

Environmental Action Plan

The Environmental Action Plan (EAP) is a guide for city leaders, staff, and members of the community to implement sustainability visions and principles. Updating and implementing the EAP helps the City support global targets for a stable climate and a resilient community.

01 Buildings & Energy
- Carbon Free Electricity
- Energy Efficiency
- GHG Inventory

02 Land Use & Green Space
- Parks System
- Tree Canopy
- Land Use

03 Regional Food Systems
- Local, Healthy, Sustainable

04 Sustainable Transportation
- Alternative Fuels
- Public Transit
- Alternative Transportation
- Active Transportation

05 Waste Reduction & Recycling
- Reduce Landfilling
- Food Waste
- Recycling
- Zero Waste Principles

06 Water Resources
- Drinking Water
- Water Quality

COMMUNITY GOALS

1. Reduce GHG Emissions
2. Effective, Affordable, Equitable Transition
3. Clean Renewable Energy
4. Actions With Intersectional Benefits
5. Public Engagement & Education
6. Local Resiliency & Adaptation

Proposed Project

Support the environmental and sustainability education of disadvantaged populations in the City

Implement a comprehensive community engagement strategy to receive community feedback on the EAP

Incorporate the community's feedback into the EAP

Community Education Program

- Hire a part-time City staff member to manage the grant award and the project

- Survey residents' knowledge/awareness of environmental sustainability issues and local government policy processes

- Determine appropriate education topics

- Work with a consultant to develop engaging educational materials, including a multi-part video series about environmental sustainability and local government processes

- Work with a consultant to develop a Cultural Competency and Sensitivity Training for City employees and project partners

Comprehensive Community Engagement

- Procure a consultant to implement a community engagement plan in conjunction with the PSB

- Hold at least two public meetings for each EAP Focus Area and the Community Goals

- Host numerous informal community meetings in neighborhoods

- Maintain an online, interactive database of community input and feedback

EAP Development and Presentation

- Consultant will incorporate community input into developing targets and priorities and any necessary addenda into the EAP

- Draft updated EAP will be shared with the PSB and community for feedback and necessary revisions

- Finalized updated EAP, reflecting community opinions and preferences, will be presented to City Council

Next Steps

1. Complete the CCG application narrative draft
2. Send draft narrative for free technical assistance and review
3. Submit application by August 1, 2024